

UKZN STUDENTS MOBILISE AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE



Members of the SA Youth Climate Coalition on UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus.

The [South African Youth Climate Change Coalition](#) (SAYCCC) recently held an Environmental Indaba on UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus – its first organised gathering on campus since being officially recognised by UKZN's Student Representative Council (SRC) at the beginning of this year's second semester.

The SAYCCC, a youth-run organisation that aims to generate awareness about climate change among young people, was formed in 2011 by students on the Durban campus of UKZN following a youth conference held prior to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban (COP17).

This youth conference (COY7), run by the Australian Youth Climate Coalition in conjunction with other youth coalitions across the world, motivated South African youth to start up their own climate change coalitions, marking the launch of the SAYCCC with assistance from international youth climate change coalitions.

After its debut in 2011, the group struggled due to a lack of logistical support and the fact that many of the initial members were still at school in various parts of the country.

Early in 2015, a group of students who had been part of the COY7 conference, re-established the organisation, with a launch in the form of a mini-conference to reconnect with various organisations and youth networks in South Africa. The event was supported by organisations such as Greenpeace, 350.org, Womin, WLTP, and Earth Warriors.

As a result of the mobilisation of these students, the SAYCCC now has branches at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in the Eastern Cape and North-West University (NWU) in the North West province. Students in the group are involved in diverse fields of study.

The Environmental Indaba held on the Pietermaritzburg campus at the end of July was aimed at increasing awareness of climate change and the environment among students in Pietermaritzburg. The group believes that youth involvement could be a game changer in the fight against environmental degradation and exploitation.

The event featured talks by UKZN SAYCCC representatives, educational entertainment, a question and answer session, presentations by other organisations and student bodies, and a keynote address by a representative from 350 Africa, Mr Khomotso Ntuli.

[350 Africa](#), which sponsored the SAYCCC's T-shirts and catering for the event, is a division of the global organisation 350, which is encouraging the world to rise to the challenge of the climate crisis.

The KwaZulu-Natal student branch of the International Association for Impact Assessment South Africa's (IAIASa) which is associated with the discipline of Geography at UKZN, delivered a presentation while Kusasa Sithole addressed the audience about the IAIAsa student branch, the benefits of becoming a member, and how to join.

'The variety of backgrounds of participants indicated that the environmental problems we face stretch across all academic disciplines and their effects are far reaching,' said Samiksha Singh of the IAIAsa KZN student branch.

'The event demonstrated that there is global concern about the environment and that the youth of today, regardless of academic qualification or race, are environmentally aware and striving towards creating a cleaner, safer environment for the future.'

The group hopes to attract support from fellow students and UKZN staff. The only funding support they have received thus far is from 350 Africa.